

PZ 3

.S8452

H

COPY 1

FT MEADE
GenColl

The Highways and The Hedges

By MYRTLE GEST STEVENS



ILLUSTRATED BY FREDERIC MUSSEY



COPYRIGHTED 1911
***By* MYRTLE GEST STEVENS**

The Highways and The Hedges

By MYRTLE GEST STEVENS



2
5
0
3
3
3
3
2
2

ILLUSTRATED BY FREDERIC MUSSEY

new © 11'11

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES



To the Y. P. S. C. E. of the First Presbyterian Church of Topeka, Kansas, and its beloved pastor, Stephen S. Estey, Ph. D., is this book affectionately dedicated by the author.



Phoenix, Arizona
Aug., 1911



BEATRICE AND THE WAIF

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

PREFACE.

Every author needs an inspiration to write a book worth while; moreover, each should have a reason for doing so. Some write to amuse, others to instruct and enlighten, while yet another desires to send out a message where the feet cannot go personally to carry it. In the case of this little book, the latter motive is paramount.

The author hopes that everyone, regardless of class or creed, who reads it may be moved—be it ever so slightly—with a desire to give aid in any manner whatsoever, to those who may need it, unmindful as well of their class or creed, yea, more, may withhold censure and condemnation until all facts are clear and plain; then should the conditions warrant an intervention, may it be accomplished as the Master would have it done.

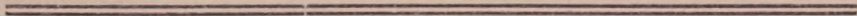
Furthermore, teach love, not hatred; peace, not strife; sweet simplicity, not decoying pomp and above all, “Be ye kind, one to another, even as He also was kind.”

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES



Open the door of your heart my friend,
Heedless of class or creed,
When you hear the cry of a brother's voice,
The sob of a child in need.
To the shining heaven that o'er you bends
You need no map or chart,
But only the love the Master gave.
Open the door of your heart.

—Edward Everett Hale.



The Highways and The Hedges

CHAPTER I.

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of great joy.

Constance Amherst sat in her favorite nook on the rose laden porch, gazing perplexedly on a springtime glory which her eyes discerned but her soul did not feel. A beautiful, golden-haired, blue-eyed young butterfly of fashion was she, with all the sweet, lovable charms which marked her at once the favorite of her pleasure loving circle. Incapable of one single, mean, ungenerous impulse with odious intent, but her innocent levity was incongruous with her undertaking at that time; responsibility sat lightly on those graceful shoulders, the depths had not been touched.

Joseph Gillman reclined in the big leather chair in his study, his eyes penetrating the same wonders of reawakening nature with a soul keenly responsive to its beauty but in his painful abstraction saw it not. Through the window at his side the sun shone brightly, but by and by a shadow would fall across it; the cornice of Holly-

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

wood Avenue Church was destined to obscure the golden sheen. This condition resulted from the "L" addition of the Sunday School rooms; the pastor's study was a cheery den in the main part of the church, near the entrance.

But whatsoever of exterior, natural gloom one part of his church building might cast upon another Joseph Gillman seldom allowed the shadows of its inner struggles to depress him; his strength was necessarily conserved to engineer the intricate machinery of his splendid mission—it was not a melancholy, repining sluggard's task.

On this particular afternoon he had relived the half hour, following his graduation and the receiving of his degree, spent with his venerable, white-haired father. Through all the years of his boyhood and young manhood the perfect mutuality of those two had been one of the beautiful examples of father and son associations as they should be but which are so rare in our present day.

With the assurance of being understood his father had laid his aged, experienced hand over the boyish, unsophisticated one and said gently: "My son, words at such

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

a time as this are inadequate and irrelevant so I shall employ but few; it is the spirit of thoughts unspoken which I wish you to carry with you out into the strife—you understand, I know; but that strife gives way to a serenity of loving purpose if you, in the very beginning give Him your complete, undivided heart; not alone the respect, admiration and love of your heart but its holiest reverence. Into that heart, my son, 'some rain must fall, some days will be dark and dreary,' but be steadfast, unmovable. Some will smite you, others will kiss your hand—feel only love and pity for them all. Keep clean, white hands but remember my boy, that they are never stained by the mire into which they plunge to rescue a fallen brother, neither are they blackened by the toil which rows a shipwrecked derelict to a sheltered harbor."

Then with a silent handclasp, the warmth of which Joseph Gillman had felt in spirit each moment of the time since then, he had gone out from that presence with the awe of one who had viewed heavenly things.

Nevertheless, he was grieved to anticipate the coming interview. At four o'clock

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

he must call upon Constance Amherst, the President of the Young People's Society of his church; the problem of her efficiency to make the most of that important office had long been a matter of conjecture with him and now she must face the test. Consultations with her had been frequent during the many months of his pastorate there for she had always contrived to make herself indispensable in his work.

Punctuality was a law with him so he arose in haste for it lacked but ten minutes till four and eight blocks lay between them.

Constance welcomed him a little restrainedly for she felt he came with sword unsheathed. He wasted no time and spoke in a tone which betrayed his deeper feelings: "What is this I hear, Miss Constance about the stand you take against admitting Bernard Crisman into the Society? I was unable to attend the business meeting last week but sent his name by a member of the Lookout Committee."

With some heat she replied with a question: "Mr. Gillman, do you approve of that hobo jail-bird becoming a member of our Society?"

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

“Why use such a stigmatic term?”

“Why? Because it applies. Mary Lamson’s cousin, who is visiting her, saw him in church last Sunday and recognized him as the same fellow he had seen out west over a year ago while there on that mining case. This Crisman was mixed up in some kind of a saloon fight and sentenced to six months in jail. Now he drops into our city, secures a good position with the Railroad Company at a time when the work was crippled by the strike and presumes to make a dash into respectable company. Don’t you realize how impossible he is?”

“No, I’m not so blinded by the fog of bigotry and you tell me nothing I did not know.”

“Really? And now don’t tell me you haven’t noticed his queer store clothes, moreover, he is illiterate; at the close of services last Sunday I overheard him say: ‘Ain’t he a fine preacher?’ Mr. Gillman, you know our young people are so clannish, and imagine him with us on a picnic or out enjoying a marshmallow roast by moonlight. Doesn’t the very idea of it amuse you?”

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

“Perhaps I am deficient in humor, but I fail to be amused. Tell me if, in your opinion, picnics and marshmallow roasts constitute the predominant benefits of a Society of christian young people?”

“O no, indeed! Think of our large gifts to charity, foreign missions, etc., and consider the great lessons we study each Sunday evening which broaden our possibilities of assisting you in your larger work; for instance, our lesson tomorrow night is—is—” confusion put vaunting to rout.

“Yes, Miss Constance, the lesson is about what?” he assisted kindly.

“The—Prodigal—Son!”

“Ah! I know. Does it thrown any light on the matter under discussion?”

“Well, hardly. You see the father received this particular prodigal and” as if banishing the subject as not practical, “he returned from a ‘far country.’ ”

“Who are we but servants of that Father who bids us give at least a cup of water in His name? And could not that ‘far country’ of sin and vice be found in our sister state, yea even around the corner of this block?”

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

She meditated a moment before delivering this answer: "I think it is impossible to execute some such injunctions in these days when we must be so wary as to the company we keep."

He suppressed a groan but when taking his leave the iron in his will was paramount, although he was neither abrupt nor unkind, only disappointed as he said: "I request you to call an executive meeting for next week and we will discuss this case thoroughly."

"O, I see, this is a declaration of war!"

"War? God forbid! Instead a felicitous shoulder to shoulder service for the Prince of Peace."

The executive meeting did not terminate to Joseph Gillman's satisfaction entirely. He loved his young people and they loved him dearly, but the thread of harmony seemed somewhat strained. The President's first question made him soul sick: "Mr. Gillman, we have just heard that Mr. Crisman is a Roman Catholic, did you know that?"

"I know that he was taught those principles in his early childhood but I am as equally certain that he is now a storm-

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

tossed mariner with despairing eyes turned toward the Young Peoples' organization of this church as his lighthouse on a far off shore, and it rests with you to keep that 'lamp all trimmed and burning.' "

"Please tell us just what you know of him." This was from Mary Lamson, the Lookout Committee Chairman.

"That I cannot do in its entirety without betraying a confidence; some day you also, may hear it voluntarily from his own lips but justice to him demands this much explanation; I met him by chance one Sunday afternoon when I conducted the meeting at the Railroad Y. M. C. A. He was there and was passing out as I entered; I invited him to stay, which he consented to do, even thanking me for my hand-clasp—he delineated it as a 'friend's grip.'

I suppose I must have said something that day which vibrated that silver thread of which every life, even the blackest can boast for since that time he has sought me and I have grown very close to him. His famished heart cried out for a confidant and I am proud to be chosen as the recipient of the secrets of his inmost heart. Furthermore, I fearlessly declare that his history

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

will shine with resplendent cleanness in that great day when written side by side with that of some members of this or of any other church in this fair land. As to his illiteracy, that is manifest only in lapses and he is rapidly correcting those. He attends the Y. M. C. A. night classes, my library is also at his disposal. I am confident, my beloved, that in God's own good time you will learn to love him as a brother. As you well know, since he is not a member of this church, he could join you only as an associate but he will not stand still."

It was decided that they invite Bernard Crisman to join them but their motive was obviously a desire to experiment.

How many fold a pastor's young people oft times augment his struggle! He draws young lives close to him and as a consequence makes them desire a place with his young people because they are a part of him, but alas! he is against a solid wall when they, either as individuals or as an organization, reject the material he presents as unworthy or do that which is as equally discouraging—give lukewarm endorsement and co-operation.

Crisman's response was long delayed

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

for a promotion at that time came as such a stimulus to him for giving to the limit of his power that his entire time and energies were assiduously devoted to his work, his studies and his visits to his "parson" as he loved to designate Joseph Gillman.



THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

CHAPTER II,

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.

The Commencement week festivities of Constance Amherst's Alma Mater were in full swing. She had journeyed far to be in attendance and was the guest of Harriet Berry, a former classmate who was, at that time, a teacher in the college.

One perfect afternoon the two girls were enjoying life to its fullest extent; they drove about the city sight seeing and calling on various friends, many of whom were college students. While on one of the busiest thoroughfares Harriet called Constance's attention to a tall, tastefully gowned young woman coming out of one of the large dry goods stores. Constance was quick to note the expression of ineffable sweetness on the beautiful face; the great deep black eyes, brimming with tender love, seemed ever on the alert for work to do.

Harriet was saying: "I have so often longed to meet her, she is Mrs. Noble—'Beneficent Beatrice' she is called. Her husband, who was much older than she, was killed in a wreck about a year ago, only a few days after their removal here. He left her a large fortune and her munificent

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

charities are familiar to every household from one end of the city to the other. Not that grotesque travesty on charity which tosses a beggar a quarter and scorns his rags; she's not one who writes a check and commissions a lackey to deliver it, neither does she ostentatiously drop a bill from daintily gloved finger-tips, then turn away with uplifted chin, curled up nose and a shrug of pretty shoulders indicative of the thought:

'Well, that's done! I hope the newspapers will give it due publicity.' Not much! she goes everywhere, does anything, sees—oh look! What has happened?" Almost as a lightning flash an auto shot past; Harriet drew her horse up short to prevent further tragedy for at their feet the gasoline monster had left its victim—a ragged newsboy.

Beatrice Noble's hands were first to succor and eye witnesses will never forget that sight; the mangled waif was gathered within the loving arms and gently borne to the girls' carriage. She entreated them to drive to the nearest hospital; the delay to call an ambulance, she said, would prolong his agony. Harriet and Constance remained in the street until they saw the hospital doors close upon the two then drove away with

the consciousness that if love could heal, a miracle was soon to be wrought within those walls.

Next afternoon Constance proposed a visit to the hospital but Harriet answered regretfully: "I'm too busy, Conie, but I wish you'd go."

Upon arriving she supposed it would be a matter of only a moment to find the child she sought, thinking of course to ask for Mrs. Noble's protegee, but quickly learned to her astonishment, that the number was by no means limited to one so had to designate specifically the one in question. She found "Beneficent Beatrice" at the child's bedside, soothing and comforting him.

As the moments fled and Constance became more acquainted with her companion she secretly deplored the disparity in their lives; her own superficialness rose up to mock her, but the harvest was one of perplexity which bore no fruit; the labyrinth was too baffling for the feet of immaturity.

They left the hospital together and when they parted Constance expressed unwonted pleasure in an invitation which in any other case would have seemed trivial to

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

her—Harriet and she were to lunch with Mrs. Noble on the morrow.

Constance was considerably puzzled to understand the address given her for it indubitably belonged to one of the poorer, less fashionable quarters of the city. At the last moment urgent work claimed Harriet's attention so Constance was compelled to go alone. She encountered no difficulty in locating the address and in doing so her homage wavered to a marked degree. The house was a one story, old style structure surrounded by a paling fence and situated on a narrow, unpaved street; everything about the premises however, was immaculately clean and neat, this also was the keynote of an unexpected charm of the interior; an air of homelike peace pervaded the cheery rooms, everything denoted usefulness; the absence of superfluity was restful. The girlish hostess, herself, clad in a simple, cotton house dress blended into the harmonious whole. More than ever, Constance felt herself an alien in that atmosphere and it irritated her, but rebellious emotions were always short lived when in the presence of Beatrice Noble.

By and by the simple, delicious luncheon was served by two young girls who

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

were made welcome at the table with hostess and guest. Constance afterward learned that two years previous, these girls had been snatched from the disgrace of the street and were receiving a home and an education from her who had rescued them.

Before the meal was concluded, two little mischievous, sunburned boys, caps in hand, appeared on the threshold of the tiny dining room. Catching the hearty, smiling greeting: "What is it laddies?" the older one responded with alacrity, "Please ma'am, Mrs. Noble, the boiler's busted and can't somebody fix it right quick?"

"That they shall, and just so quickly it will make your little heads whirl," then with a wink at Constance added, "sit down in the kitchen you laddies, and wait till Mary comes to give you a peep at the pantry shelf." Four sparkling eyes and two happy, well stretched mouths, cognizant from past experiences of the weight of those words, faded blissfully away into the realm of the small boy's delight!

With a quiet, "Please excuse me a moment, Miss Amherst," Mrs. Noble telephoned to a plumber to go at once to repair the kitchen boiler in the "Beatrice Home for Street Waifs."

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

Be it known in passing, that before she slept a personal inspection was made to satisfy herself that all was well with her lambs.

The conversation soon drifted to churches and charities. Constance unreservedly extolled Mrs. Noble's generous benevolences, but was silenced with such gentle, kindly dignity that she was face to face with a new lesson to be learned, "True charity suffereth long and is kind, but vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up."

Only one phase of her work would the splendid Beatrice discuss and that she did, freely and enthusiastically. The reason for this was obvious, for in it she had the co-operation of others and was anxious to accord to them unstinted praise and consideration.

About one year previous she had selected a five-acre tract of land outside the city limits a short distance but in close proximity to a suburban carline. These five acres were all that remained as salable of what had once been the large estate of an old wealthy family and on them were the large house of fourteen rooms, spacious out-buildings, a fine orchard and grape arbor, all evincing signs of neglect but in a

good state of preservation. This valuable little garden spot had, for many years, been a bone of contention among several heirs, but finally an amicable settlement had been made and Mrs. Noble fortunately secured the property.

She began operations for the founding of a home for waifs by placing in charge a competent man and his widowed sister. This sister had two children, a boy of ten and a girl two years his junior; to support them she had been compelled to take in washings; the little boy had also begun his battle on the street in the bitter cold, keeping step to the music of "papers, evening papers."

From this nucleus an institution of large proportions and remarkable power had developed within one short year, and at the time of Constance's visit with its founder, a family of forty was enjoying its manifold benefits. The greater number of these were waifs of both sexes having no home ties whatsoever. Sometimes a juvenile rescue from the streets revealed deplorable home conditions and these cases received immediate attention.

One crippled, lonely young mother was

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

found who sat all day in a stifling tenement room patiently awaiting the return of the little bread winner with his pittance. She was an intelligent, cultured woman and declared it the fullest, happiest day of her life when she began her duties in the school-room of the Home which sheltered her son.

A long, comfortable building had been erected near the main house; this served the triple purpose of dining room, school-room, and chapel. This teacher sat in her invalid chair and trained the impoverished little brains during three hours of the day. They spent the remainder of the day in various light duties. The boys worked in the gardens and orchards with an experienced farmer. Once each week they built a miniature house or barn under the supervision of an expert carpenter, whose loss of two limbs in a falling scaffold accident had rendered him unfit to support his children by day labor; these "works of art" were used for chicken coops, for fruit and vegetable bins or else were carefully torn down and the material used again.

Meanwhile, the girls were acquiring skill in the kitchen, the laundry, with the needle, in short becoming practical house-keepers under the guiding hand of capable

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

women, all without exception, unfortunate mothers of some of the inmate children.

Every Saturday from noon until chore time was a holiday for the entire institution; many times it was spent in picnics to the little grove nearby, closing with a basket lunch; at other times they were treated to a trip into the city with their benefactress; again in winter when blizzards made outdoor sports impossible, they all gathered around warm roaring fires in the dining hall and cracked nuts, played games and in countless ways enjoyed a life which was indeed the antithesis of the old regime.

Sundays were red letter days. In the forenoons they always studied a bible lesson from their leaflets, sang songs from little hymn books and usually Mrs. Noble went out to talk to them. In the afternoons, representatives of the Young People's Societies from some of the various churches never failed to visit them, bringing their gifts and the good cheer which breathes of fellowship and love.

Beatrice Noble had evolved and financed this worthy project and also set the complicated machinery in motion, but when yet in its infancy, it caught and held the atten-

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

tion of scores of persons having charitable inclinations and well filled purses but with no natural conception of how to engineer some feasible, philanthropic scheme.

Donations and contributions soon became weekly, if not daily events. The young people of one church had planned and economized until they were able to take forth their offering—a fine portable house for hospital purposes. Another society bought and donated a valuable cow, and this marked the opening of a new era at the Home; twenty cows were quickly added to the dairy herd and the sales from that source alone went far toward covering the expenses of the establishment.

Five Junior Societies lived in ecstasies for months, hugging the pious sensation of having jointly given the pony and light wagon which transported the milk and cream to the creamery each day; a similar necessity for the delivery of eggs, vegetables and fruit from house to house, had come through the generosity of college students and teachers.

Mrs. Noble's ideas for her course in the future were as practical as those of the past had proven to be. As soon as a child was

sufficiently strong and capable to be taken into some good home to do light work and attend school it must do so and make room for the incoming ones. Never should one be bound out to service, but always subject to her recall in case she deemed their duties too arduous or their guardians unfit.

Constance listened with a troublesome lump somewhere near the vocal cords, a lump which threatened to become of such size as to prevent her expressing approval in a polite stereotyped phrase. Had she known it the trick could easily have been accomplished in a manner most pleasing to the narrator—the street waif nomenclature could boast the aptest term: “You betcher life, she’s the dope!”

At length Constance ventured the question: “To what church do you belong, Mrs. Noble? I hope you are of the same denomination as I.”

“Ah! I see, a Protestant, aren’t you?”

“Most certainly I am.”

“Proud of it, my dear?” The sweet face and gentle voice intimated naught but kindness.

“Proud? Indeed I would not live

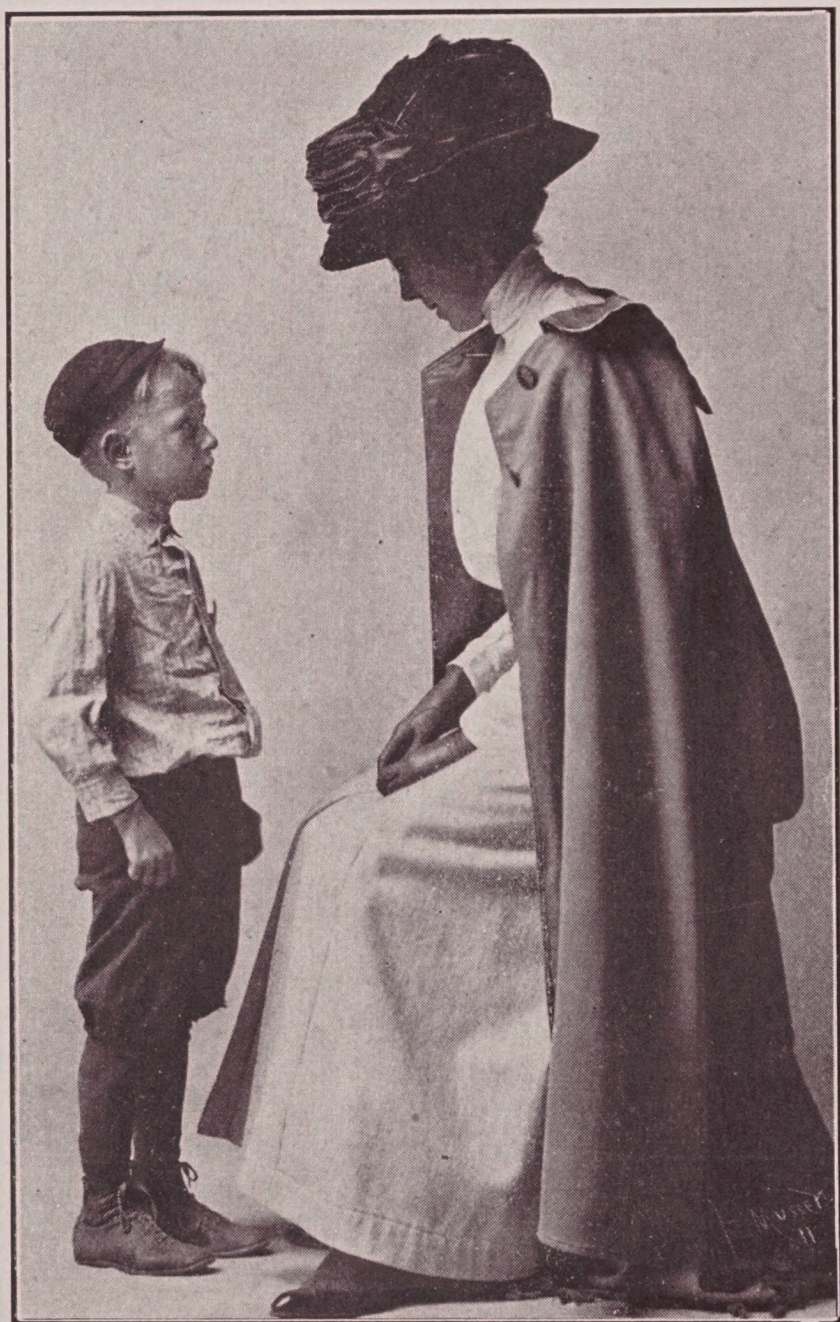
THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

without my church!" Constance retorted, haughtily.

Sorrowfully, Beatrice made mental note of the fact that her guest did not say: "I could not live without my Christ." Aloud she asked, with much feeling: "Dear friend, what do sects or creeds matter when there is so much work to do? Work which no church demands of us but which the compassionate Savior of men, speaking through the ages, pleads with us in supplication to perform willingly and lovingly in His name. These errands of love simply play into our hands in the form of suffering and sorrow all about us.

Oh, what a need of unity of effort! Why must that blessed word truth be so hopelessly warped and ruthlessly sullied by the fires of sectarian hate? God intended it to be the guiding star of one great family and have one meaning only; individuals misconstrue it to mean whatsoever they most desire, what is most convenient." The strong, perfect, efficient hands were lifted in an unconscious, appealing gesture—"Believe me Miss Amherst, doctrines and precepts are noble and inspiring, but conscientious practice makes them divine.

You asked me though regarding my



BEATRICE AND THE WAIF

church affiliations and I gladly enlighten you—I have none, but I presume you would call me a Roman Catholic, even though I am sincere when I tell you that since I was seven year of age, I have lived no closer to that church than I have to those of your Protestant faith, but when tiny children together at our sweet, loving mother's knee, little brother and I imbibed the teachings of that church. Ah! dear little brother, where are you now? How gladly for your sake would I temper the winds to every little orphan in the world."

Thus, reminicently, she became oblivious of her surroundings for the moment, and was mercifully spared the sneer, fleeting but cynical which swept her companion's face. Suddenly, she added contritely: "Oh! I beg your pardon Miss Amherst, memories steal in unawares sometimes, but I promise to not again forget your presence."

Later, when goodbyes had been exchanged and Constance was hastening to her friend, her many conflicting emotions held high carnival; the great vivisector of the conscience stealthily applied the shining knife and patiently bided his time to view a naked soul.

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

CHAPTER III.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

Not until during the intimacy of retirement was Constance able to speak of her visit with the young philanthropist, and then Harriet detected a reluctance to be explicit as to details. Reaching over, she drew the golden head to her own pillow and gently strove to comfort: "Conie, dear, you are troubled, I know. I, too, felt that pain for many weeks after I commenced to study, from afar though it was, the life and illimitable possibilities of that wonderful women. Pain before happiness. Ah! what an elusive elfin is happiness; we feel assured we have joyfully snatched it and carefully folded it to our breasts for all time, then in one short hour a gigantic whirlwind is born and we must begin building anew. The fault lies in the instability of our foundations, Conie: They consist of too many defective stones of selfishness, a superfluity of the crumbling mortar of haughty, blinding untruth, and rest, too much on the quicksand of irresponsibility. Our church, our friends, yea, even our God—all will fail to satiate in this mad race for unalloyed

happiness if we **will not** allow our hearts to get right with the truth of things.

I love to compare Mrs. Noble's perfect life to a wheel, having for its hub the meek and lowly Nazerene, and leading to Him from the outer rim—the rushing, panting, throbbing world are ten spokes which I have named: Love (synonomous with charity), faith, hope, sympathy, unselfishness, forgiveness, sincerity, endurance, obedience and truthfulness; one imperfect component part endangers the whole, and our Father knows how deficient are the most of us in all of these virtues, but He also sees and knows if we strive faithfully and unceasingly,

‘To show ourselves approved unto Him, His workmen that needeth not to be ashamed.’ ”

A silence, fraught with struggles and suffering, fell between them; at length Constance spoke hesitatingly, choosing her words as if groping for support: “That is a large order you give, Harriet, especially to one who, I confess, has undoubtetly appeared in the light of an egotist, but I catch your meaning and it clearly defines my path of duty in a controversy at home.

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

Joseph Gillman was right, as usual, and I the one who was wrong."

"Joseph Gillman again. Conie, you speak so often of him."

"Why not? He is to our city what Beatrice Noble is to this. Small wonder we all love him."

"Dearie, it's more serious than that; **you** love him in a different way from all the others."

"Yes, if you must hear it!" It was the cry of a wounded fawn at bay. "He alone is Hollywood Avenue Church to me. Ah! blush for me; 'tis for him, not the cause of Christ that I work; but I'm only one of the crowd to him. We almost quarreled before I left, for his indifference was so pronounced that I was piqued almost beyond my power to control; I became stubborn and contested his argument and opinion; but he is so fine, so strong, so noble—noble! O Harriet, draw me closer! Can't you see? He is noble and so is Beatrice. What a pair! Some day they will meet and then, hand in hand, they will go out into the world together—this suffering, misunderstood world, which needs them so much. What a power! Yes, what a power for

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

good! O Father, help me to lift up mine eyes to the benignant source of all their strength and redeem this selfish life of mine!"

The vivisector only smiled; his task was far from being complete.



THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

CHAPTER IV.

*From trials none can be exempt,
'Tis God's all-wise decree;
Satan the weakest saint will tempt,
Nor is the strongest free.*

When Constance reached home she found arrangements practically completed for a social to be given by the Young People's Society of the church. The evening chosen followed one of those rare days in June when all things in the universe seemed to dwell in peace with each other.

The church lawn, lighted with dozens of picturesue lanterns, and dotted here and there with happy, laughing groups of chatting youth, impressed Bernard Crisman as a glimpse into some dreamy Elysium as he approached with his "parson." It was to be his initial entrance into the desired circle; desired so much because these people were Joseph Gillman's people. The minister facilitated the ordeal for Crisman as much as possible by throwing himself into any embarrassing gap which yawned threateningly.

About nine o'clock a superb summer moon rose out of the east, over the city spires and illumined the scene with a flood of that wondrous glory which, through all

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

time has and will ever cause the children of men to stop and ponder, even more—to worship the Power that sends and controls it. Lanterns were extinguished and the clan gathered about upon a large mat on the grass and indulged in their favorite amusement, the game of impromptu stories—jolly, innocent, amusing stories. Sometimes a humorous account of someone's trip, a witty portrayal of another's misadventure, or the fruit of some imaginative brain. Mary Lamson was long on ghost stories; her cousin, Page Carter, could rattle off side-splitting, exaggerated tales of his travels until the crowd would beg for a respite that they might get a long breath.

Carter had stopped over to be present at this social, for he had a wicked interest in witnessing the "lion-taming;" it had gone out that in all probability Bernard Crisman would meet with them at last. Carter's former poisoned arrows had found a home and he maliciously awaited the denouement. The story which he contributed to the game, indeed "brought down the house," and its reception tickled his vanity; it was not original with him, but rather new at that time.

"Last week," he began, "when I was in Chicago, I boarded a crowded car headed

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

for one of the suburbs. Soon a lady entered with a baby on one arm and in the other and piled all over her, it seemed, were bundles galore. I offered her my seat and, after she had taken it, handed me a nickel, asking me to pay her fare when the conductor passed through, which I did.

When a long way out, she began preparations to leave the car and straightway demanded her change of me. 'Change,' I asked in bewilderment; 'you gave me a nickel.'

'I did not,' she contradicted. 'I gave you a quarter.'

She stirred up such a fuss that I handed her twenty cents to get rid of her; but, out of curiosity, followed her off of the car. Before she had gone far she dropped one of her miscellaneous packages. I picked it up and ordinarily would have returned it to its owner. However, in this case I felt myself a party aggrieved, so kept my find."

After a pause, Mary exclaimed: "Really, Page, how awful of you!"

"What I want to know is what it contained." This from Constance, peeping around Mary's shoulder.

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

"Honest, are you curious as to its contents?"

"O Page! hurry up and tell us," came from a half dozen or more.

"Very well, my children. It was brimming full of fish-bait to catch suckers!"

"Oh, ohs! ha, has! my, mys! and dear mes!" swelled the chorus until a general hub-bub was in progress. Crisman's first impulse was to exclaim: "Stung!" but caught himself in time; that would go with the bunch out west, but perhaps not here. His ambition to please the clan was pathetic.

When the last titter and giggle had been stifled and order was restored, the minister said: "Mary, haven't you seen some ghosts recently?"

"Ghosts, recently? Well, I should say; so recently that my teeth chatter yet."

"So creepy as that?" queried one.

"Sure! These were men ghosts."

"Yes, they must be the worst kind," piped a small voice.

"Go on, Mary," commanded Constance. "This promises to be interesting."

"All right." And Mary rocked to and fro as if very much excited. "Last week,

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

one afternoon, I went with Cousin Page for a long drive in the country. When we were returning and while yet a long way out, our horse took sick and we were forced to seek accommodations for the night with a farmer's family. They were eating supper when we stopped and hospitably invited us to partake also. Sometime in the night I heard the dog bark and howl fit to wake the dead. 'Shut up Towser!' roared the farmer, but outraged Towser continued to treat the night air to low yelps at irregular intervals; finally I got up and looked out of the window and lo! I wish you could have seen that sight out in the plum orchard. Fully a dozen country yokels, I suppose they were, robed in the elaborate attire of the choicest ghosts from Ghostville, were holding a con-flab, sotto voce, and pointing and gesticulating toward my window, but their voices were not so low but that I heard or else absorbed the sentiment of the group, which was to seize me by some means and deliver me to the neighborhood witch. Ugh! that's all I can tell you."

"Mercy! You must have been frightened entirely silly," shuddered one.

"Almost," admitted Mary, ready to shriek—with laughter.

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

“What happened next?” Constance asked eagerly.

“My child, I woke up and ended the dream. You see, I had eaten cooked sauerkraut and weinerwursts for supper!”

“O give us a rest!” they shouted but Bernard thought, compassionately: “Poor girl; now she’s been stung again.”

The fun continued unabated until at last only two links of the chain yet remained to respond—Joseph Gillman and his ward. The moment was one of tense expectancy. As the minister started to speak, Bernard lifted a silencing hand, saying: “Please wait, dear friend; I’ve a story to tell.”

His voice alone was a power to reckon with during the narration; it was deep and forceful, but gentle, and gave hint of lonely days and lonelier nights spent in the mountain fastnesses or amid desert solitudes; its cadences breathed significantly of poignant suffering during hours when conscience was patiently imploring a chance. Resolutely he faced his auditors and repeated to them most of that history of his life which torture could not have wrung from Gillman’s lips without the other’s consent.

“First, young people, I want to thank

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

you for your invitation to be one of you; I prize it next to the love of this man at my side; but I am not content to enter into fellowship with you until my past has been made plain. You will not find my language especially choice; the conditions and associates of the years behind me were not conducive to the improvement of my rhetoric, although I've studied when everything seemed against me; but you shall have the story straight.

My parents were southern gentlefolks, to whom were born my sister and I. Reverses came early, and when sister was five and I was seven, father died. Within two years my tender little mother, unable to longer endure the hardships of poverty, succumbed to disease, leaving us alone and penniless. An Orphans' Home sheltered us until a wealthy couple adopted my pretty sister, and I was taken by people who were roving and unkind. Before I was ten years old we were living from hand to mouth in a Nevada mining town. I carried water to the hands building a new railroad through there, and was beaten when I went home if I didn't produce every cent of my meager wages. One day I spent ten cents for meat to feed the half-starved camp dogs, and that

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

night I was flogged within an inch of my life. From that day to this, I have never seen that man. After running away, I went from one place to another, living as I could, but most of my time has been spent with the railroads in some capacity. I frankly confess that my life during those years was neither as clean nor as circumspect as it should have been. Alexander Pope was right when he wrote:

‘Vice is a monster of so frightful mein
As to be hated, needs but to be seen.

But seen too often, familiar with her face
We first endure ,then pity, then embrace.’

Eighteen months ago I was in a small extreme western town, enjoying a good position, but encouraging questionable associates. One night, on my way down town, I overtook an intoxicated fellow—who hated me like poison—insulting a young girl. I interceded in the girl’s behalf. He struck me and ran. I followed him up an alley, and when passing the rear door of a saloon, a stray bottle was hurled out, striking him squarely. The result was a six months jail sentence for me, because he swore that I had struck him with intent to kill, and there had been no witnesses. I was absolutely innocent inasmuch as that act was con-

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

cerned, but it exemplifies the weight of public opinion against us when we have deliberately chosen and cultivated evil associates.

During those months in that rotten hole, I vowed that when I was set free I would be decent—I would endeavor in some way to cultivate Christian people. My ideas of religion were vague, indeed. The little I knew was the recollection of times spent with sister at our sweet little Catholic mother's knee, when she taught us to love the Cross and the Holy Mother.

The evening following my release I passed the small church in the town and discovered that services were being held. Eagerly I entered and listened intently, but was soon convinced that the speaker was grossly maligning my dead mother's creed, as he termed it—exposing Catholicism. Not one word to comfort a repentant sinner, no life-line thrown out to a helpless, wayfaring soul, no expression of love for his Matchless Christ—just a ceaseless, sickening tirade. Suddenly a man beside me said, half aloud: 'My, he's a Christian for true!'

'You lie!' I hissed, beside myself with rage and hatred; 'he's a fiend. He'd better

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

strive to cleanse the world of corruption and hypocrisy before he dares denounce any creed; we need the inspiration to love, not to hate.'

I left at once with a feeling in my heart that Hell must be all about me and that mine was a cast-off soul; you see, I was experiencing a bad beginning. All this does not imply that I am passing sentence on that man. The import of his message may have been perfectly right, it may have been wholly wrong; who am I that I should judge? But the point I desire you to see is this—his words were, to me, a sacrilege. I had expected to hear him preach the gospel of love and peace, but instead, he was endeavoring to renounce and destroy—was engendering strife and unrest. More than that, he was controverting the loving admonition of a woman—my mother—the memory of whom was the cleanest, divinest thing on earth, left me to which I might safely cling.

To us southern men, regardless of the distance from our native soil we may wander, a woman is the noblest handiwork of God, a being set apart; the embodiment of all that is true and pure and one who has first claims upon us to protect that honor

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

and truth with our lives if need be; and to us, our mothers—well, if I were not to be permitted the holy privilege of believing my mother's teachings to be true, to whom in this wide world should I turn for the truth?

I entered that house of worship with a body strong in the brute strength that one man uses against another in the strife with the obstacles in his temporal existence, but with a soul weak, sick and hungry for a morsel of comfort to aid me in fighting the battles which lay before me—a supposed criminal, just liberated from the municipal cell of correction. I left the place—almost a blasphemer.

It is difficult to surmise what the outcome might have been had I not come upon some men talking on a street corner. I listened to the words of one and acted at once. He spoke in the vernacular of the rustic west: 'Say, fellers, it's Topeka fer me; there's a dickens of a strike on back there and all kinds of a chance fer men to get a peach of a job!'

One day a few months ago, this man—"his arm fell caressingly across Gillman's shoulders—"stretched out a friendly hand and drew me to him with those cords of love which it seems to me no one could resist;

with his arm linked in mine he led me into the first place of worship I had entered since that awful night out yonder in the far west, and O what a difference! Young friends, he must have the words of divine love set to music in his soul. Haven't you noticed how often he selects the words of a song for a theme? That day he asked us young men to sing:

‘Must Jesus bear the Cross alone,

And all the world go free?

No, there's a Cross for everyone,

And there's a Cross for me.’

Immediately following this, he announced: ‘Boys, that is the keynote of what I want to talk to you about.’ I left that meeting with an unspoken vow to take up my Cross and follow Him to the end of my life, haltingly and blindly though it might be. On the next Sunday I came up here to Hollywood Avenue church that I might hear a second message from him; as you perhaps recollect, the words of his text were again to be found in a wonderful song: ‘My son, give me thine heart.’ Such a plea from such a man! Now, God helping me, I shall strive to atone for the wasted past and hope to so live that neither you, my friends, nor

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

your beloved pastor will ever feel that your trust in me has been misplaced."

Through it all, Constance could not separate her thoughts from another voice, more cultivated in its intonation perhaps, but always accompanied by the same flash of eyes of velvet blackness, a similar suppliant lift of the raven-crowned head. When he had finished, her quivering lips framed a question: "Tell me, Mr. Crisman, is your sister still living, and if so, what is her name?"

"That is my sorrow, Miss Amherst; one of the harvests, I suppose, of the tares I have sown—I shall never know where to search for her. We called her Betty, but her name was Beatrice. Her adopted parents forbade all communication between us when she left the home."

Beyond that question, Constance was silent, but the vivisector never deserted his post.



THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

CHAPTER V.

*"I sat alone with my conscience
In a place where time had ceased,
And we talked of my former living
In the land where the years increased.
In ghosts of forgotten actions
Came floating before my sight,
And things that I thought were dead things
Were alive with a terrible might.
The vision of all my past life
Was an awful thing to face,
Alone with my conscience sitting
In that silently solemn place."*

—Dean Stubb.

Big Dan Amherst, the basso of the church choir, was first to move. With one stride he reached Bernard with outstretched hand saying: "Come, my dear sir, you're a man! I want to shake your hand." And the big arm, inured to hard labor though it was, fairly ached before the clan was done with him. Before parting, a new president, new because she had acquired untold wisdom in one short hour, addressed her pastor: "Mr. Gillman, while we bow our heads in reverence to Him who knows best in all things, will you not tell us your story?" It was the outpouring of a heart replete with happiness.

When Mary Lamson looked about for her cousin, he was missing. Joseph Gill-

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

man had seen him slip away during the excitement of welcoming Bernard Crisman. Years later, when he, Page Carter, was compelled to secure Crisman's signature to his passes, prior to taking his business trips relative to the legal end of the Corporation he represented, he felt somewhat ashamed and finally mustered up courage to apologize openly for his malicious thrusts in the days ago, even though in his secret heart, he was jealous of the other's success. With great magnanimity Crisman begged him: "My dear sir, don't humble yourself before me; I was accustomed to hard knocks in those days, but now they're all forgotten. Since then there has been too much pleasant work to do to harbor grudges; but I thank you from the depths of my heart."

Hands met in a long clasp, Carter gazed as if fascinated, into the deep, black eyes, grown brighter if that could be, after the happy successful years, then silently left the office. Out in the hall he soliloquized: "Gad, that's what I call a man! A lion tamed," but surveying his purple hand, "his paw retains the grip of iron."

Thus absorbed, when leaving the elevator he collided with a disreputable figure sauntering along the dim corridor; the

slouch hat, ragged khaki trousers crammed into much worn, hob-nailed boots, face and hands seamy with toil and dissipation—all combined into one grotesque nondescript—was a sight so uncommon in that office building that Carter stared at him in amazement. Before he recovered his composure sufficiently to pass on, he was asked: “Say mister, do you know a feller by the name of Bernard Crisman?”

“Rather think I do.”

“Well, kin you tell me whar I kin find him?”

“Sure thing. But what’s your game, want a job or a pass or is it a case of blackmail?” The smoldering fire of malice flamed anew with the first hot breath of suspicion.

“Now sonny, don’t you git gay with me,” he warned with a leer. “I was considered a dangerous man back thar in the west whar I come from; I ain’t no tin angel on wheels yet, but I done that man Crisman a dirty, mean trick, yes a derved dirty trick one time; I played him fer a filthy joker and won out then, but I guess I got stung by one of them sorry bees an’—an’—I jes want to tell him so when I kin see him.”

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

"That's certainly a laudable impulse," Carter interjected, with a sneer; his atrocious house of cards tumbled ere it had been builded.

"Eh? What's that yer givin' me?"

"I say," he amended in the same tone, "that you certainly mean well."

"Yer talkin' right smoothly now, pard; 'taint been long I've felt this way though. One night back yonder, I was passin' the church in our leetle town and the young folks, they call it some kind of a society, was a havin' an ice cream social. I thought it would be a mighty fine joke to walk off with one of them freezers and have a social all to myself. Well, you can take it from me, I didn't get fer till the purtiest kind of a gal come a runnin' after me and stopped me. Afraid? huh, glory be! not a bit, them western gals ain't afraid of nuthin' less we're plum crazy drunk; and mister," he hesitated, as if the anomaly were so unbelievable that it inspired awe, even yet, "by jing! that gal says as sweet as you please: 'Come on back with me and you shall have all the ice cream you can eat.' Yes sir, them very words, and she delivered the goods too, then some nice young feller brought me a plate

of cake. Gee! it was lickum good, but somehow it kinder stuck in my craw, after I tried stealin' it, you know.

Well I done some tall thinkin' after that and my infernal think machine resur-rected more meanness than that ornery old devil they call Faust, ever dreamed about; quicker'n pigtail lightnin' I could see an innocent man walkin' into a rotten old jail because I swore to a lie. Purty soon I say to myself: 'You old geaser, you can't die till you tell him yer sorry.' I won't tell you how I got here, nor how many of them railroad guys' hides I've punctured on the way, that's a long story; but jest please tell me, pard, how I'll find him."

"Sixth floor, turn to the right, his name is on the door." Carter spoke very abruptly, the past was crowding the present.

The tramp started on, then hastily re-traced his steps to reach Carter before he left the building "S-s-say, mister, d'ye s'pose he'll kick me down-stairs?"

"He is more likely to invite you to dinner," he snapped, with the irritation of a man who was very much dissatisfied with himself.

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

“Great hornspoon! I wonder,” muttered the retreating figure, as he shambled into the elevator; then, as an afterthought, while he soared upward: “I bet that guy handed me a bunch bigger’n this old steel rat-trap, but here goes anyhow. Bless Pete! they ain’t no wife and babies to starve if I do git knocked out.



THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

CHAPTER VI.

Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

Constance Amherst's work had just begun. She felt absolutely certain that Beatrice Noble was Bernard Crisman's sister, but she alone was guardian of the secret. Divulge it, and sooner or later Beatrice Noble and Joseph Gillman would be brought together; it took only a dwarfed imagination to prophesy the end. No man and woman with such charming personalities and possessing to such a high degree, as they those attributes which make their lives so palpably inseparable, could long resist the influence of the other. Lock the secret safely and what? She dared not contemplate.

A few days later, this note reached the little old-fashioned cottage on the unpaved street:

"Dear Mrs. Noble: We need you with us just now, very much; no one but you can satisfy our long felt want. Say that this is sufficient to warrant your coming to us, and at once.

Lovingly yours,
CONSTANCE AMHERST.

Two weeks passed away, and late one Sunday afternoon, the vivisector glided on

his way, leaving a finished work, thereby missing a sweet finale:

“Miss Constance, I enjoyed the services in your church today, very much, and though I confess considerable ignorance regarding the doctrines and precepts of the Protestant churches, I often attend them, but never before did I hear an appeal from the pulpit, such as was made this morning.”

“And what was that, Mrs. Noble?”

“Mr. Gillman’s question preceding the benediction: ‘Does anyone present know of any member of this church who is sick or in need of help in any way?’ Is that not unusual?”

“I believe it is, although it is familiar to us, for it is his custom, but then—Joseph Gillman is a very unusual man in many respects.” A pause before she continued: “Mrs. Noble, I trust you will pardon me when I inquire your maiden name.”

“Certainly. My own, that is the name of my birth was Crisman.”

“And your brother’s name?”

“It was Bernard. Why do you ask?”

“Because Bernard Crisman is, at this moment coming up the walk leading to this rose-covered nook and with him I see his truest friend, Joseph Gillman.”

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

June had come again. The church lawn was lighted and the clan was separated into groups, not unlike the time one year previous. One member was absent—he had slipped away with his bride, and they two as one were kneeling at the chancel-rail of dimly lighted Hollywood Avenue Church; their church, where henceforth two lives were destined to fulfill Constance's beautiful prophecy. The stillness emphasized the low voices:

“Beatrice, love like ours comes but once in a lifetime, shall we not here alone, consecrate it to Him who gave it life and made this day possible?”

“Yes, Joseph; and may we not also together pray that there be more love given to Him?”

Anticipating their pastor's fancy to flee to his church with his wife, the choir and organist were prepared. Softly stealing in and up to the organ loft unnoticed, they made to float down upon the bowed heads, strains of angelic sweetness:

“More love to Thee, O, Christ.

More love to Thee.

Hear Thou the prayer I make

On bended knee.”

THE HIGHWAYS AND THE HEDGES

An hour later, the rose laden nook was once more resonant with voices. The moonbeams played hide-and-seek across the two earnest faces. Constance and Bernard discussed the events of the day, and planned for a future which, to the little bird nestled among the leaves seemed to concern only two in the whole world.



One copy del. to Cat. Div.

OCT 9 1911

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 002 036 267 4

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00014933803

*Printing
Designing
Illustrating
Embossing*



**Arizona
STATE
PRESS
Phoenix**

